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## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Range of the Plain Titmouse in Oregon.**—In the *Auk* (xxxvii, 1920, p. 594) Mr. W. F. Henninger records the Plain Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus inornatus*) as a new bird for the state list of Oregon. In looking over the available literature I was surprised to see that this species had not hitherto been mentioned (except in Bailey's *Handbook of Birds of the Western United States*, 1914, p. 456) as a common resident in the south-central part of the state. Its occurrence there has long been known to ornithologists. I have found it common at Grants Pass (November 30), Rogue River (October 4), Gold Hill (March, April and May), Medford (June, 1916), and Ashland (June, 1916). We therefore have a continuous line of records from Grants Pass on the north to within a few miles of the California line on the south. Specimens were taken by the writer at Grants Pass, Rogue River and Gold Hill during the spring of 1916, and I have seen several skins from Medford and Ashland. The species is common in the scrub-oak forests of the region along Rogue River and its tributaries in the lower valleys. So far as known it does not occur in the Douglas fir forests to the east or west of the valley.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, November 10, 1920.*

**California Woodpecker Steals Eggs of Wood Pewee.**—It is common knowledge that the jay is not the only egg eater among our birds. On occasion birds of many other species rob nests. The worst egg eater yet discovered in my aviary is a Santa Cruz Song Sparrow. The following note adds the California Woodpecker to the list of guilty birds.

While riding horse-back about a mile west of the village in Yosemite Valley, on July 17, 1920, my attention was attracted to a pair of Western Wood Pewees who were snapping their bills and making a great fuss. On looking above my head, I discovered a California Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus bairdi*) calmly perched on the pewee's nest and eating one of the eggs. I could see the white and the yolk of the egg on the woodpecker's bill, as he raised his head. After watching for some time, I attempted to frighten the robber away, but experienced considerable difficulty in doing so. When he finally left the nest the pewees continued to dart at him, to drive him farther away. Soon one of the pewees, apparently the female, returned to the nest, picked up an egg-shell and flew off with it. I was unable to see what she did with it. In half a minute she returned and began incubating the remaining eggs.—HAROLD C. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California, November 10, 1920.*

**Late Nesting of the Green-backed Goldfinch.**—While working around my place on November 1, last, I was attracted by the notes of a Green-backed Goldfinch (*Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus*) and upon investigating found two young in a nest, ready to leave. On November 2 the birds had gone and I could not locate them.—W. LEE CHAMBERS, *Eagle Rock, California, December 6, 1920.*

**Speed of Flight of the Red-shafted Flicker.**—In the forenoon of November 1, 1920, I was driving a motor car on the main highway going north out of Fresno. We were making just 30 miles an hour on a level, straight road. The throttle was set and the speedometer was registering the speed very accurately under these conditions. A few miles north of Fresno a Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer collaris*), flying from our right, attempted to cross the road about 100 feet in front of us, but upon arriving at the center of the road turned north and flew ahead of us for two-tenths of a mile, keeping about fifteen feet above the road. My guess is that the bird was surprised and, thinking itself pursued, made the best speed it could. We did not change our speed nor did the flicker change its course, and we overtook and passed under the bird in two-tenths of a mile. There was a little wind from the west but not enough to affect the speed of flight. The weather was fair and had been for several days. Evidently the bird was making only 27 miles an hour and flying as fast as it could. While there is no way of proving that the flicker was flying at top speed, the circumstances made me think it was. One of these birds was given a speed of 25 miles an hour when flying parallel with

an automobile but apparently not in front of it (Wetmore, CONDOR, XVIII, 1916, p. 112). These facts are some indication that flickers when not pressed fly very nearly as fast as they do when making their best speed.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *Berkeley, California, December 6, 1920.*

**The Bendire Thrasher Nesting in California.**—On April 11, 1920, I was collecting on the Mohave Desert near Victorville, California, with Mr. Selwyn Rich, a fellow member of the Cooper Club. He had the good luck to discover a nest with four eggs, incubation just started, of the Bendire Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*). Unfortunately we were unable to collect the bird, but as the eggs were typical of this species there was little doubt left in our minds as to their correct identity. I substantiated our views, when, on April 26, 1920, in the same general locality, I took a similar set, with the female parent.



Fig. 7. NEST AND EGGS OF THE BENDIRE THRASHER; TAKEN NEAR VICTORVILLE, MOHAVE DESERT, CALIFORNIA; APRIL 26, 1920.

The nest in each case was about four feet up in "cholla" cactus, and in each instance the bird was extremely wary.

The main body of the nest is of sticks, and there is a well shaped cup, lined with fine grasses, weed stems, soft weed bark, a little rabbit fur and some cottony material (see fig. 7).

This adds another to the few records of the Bendire Thrasher in California, and it is, I believe, the first nesting record for the state. The bird collected is no. 1984, coll. W. M. P., and the sets of eggs nos. 1235, and 1266, coll. W. M. P.—WRIGHT M. PIERCE, *Claremont, California, October 4, 1920.*

**Unusual Late Summer Birds in the Yosemite Valley.**—There is a wider dispersal of nesting birds during August and September than at any other time of year. During

these months birds that habitually nest at lower elevations migrate higher into the mountains. Some worth-while evidence in this regard was obtained this summer in the Yosemite Valley, by keeping a daily bird record. Following are a few notes on the "erratic stragglers" that drifted into the Valley during the last few days of July and the months of August and September, 1920.

The first bird of this class to appear was the California Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*). One lone bird was seen on July 26, in the meadow near old Camp Ahwahnee. From this date until September 11, when they were last seen, the birds were found in this locality on every visit. Their numbers increased here, yet they were never seen in any other section of the Valley. On the morning of August 26, ten were counted.

The next wanderer to appear was the Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*). An individual of this species was first noted July 28. By August 5, there were a number of phoebes scattered along the stream within a mile of the village. One of these appeared one hundred yards above the Sentinel Bridge, selecting a dead stump which stood out of the river as his favorite perch. This bird held down the last patrol; no other phoebe was found up stream beyond this point. During the month of August and the first two weeks in September, phoebes were fairly common along the river below the village. Gradually their numbers decreased and on September 25 the Black Phoebe was noted for the last time.

On August 18, a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) was discovered in the meadow below the village. When first seen he was perched on a pile of dry sticks. He flew often, diving into the dry grass for grasshoppers. By moving cautiously, the bird was approached to within twelve feet, and identification was made positive. This meadow was visited on several following days, but the bird was not seen again.

On the morning of September 4, in the meadow of our many bird adventures, a solitary White-rumped Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*) was noted. Two days later the bird was again seen. This time we were able to approach within six feet of it. It was a handsome bird in full plumage and a clear view of its distinct rump patch was obtained.

A pair of English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) were noted September 2, in the barnyard at "Kinneyville".

August 29, a flock of fifteen California Bush-tits (*Psaltiriparus minimus californicus*) was seen in the Kellogg oaks on the north side of the Valley. Again, on September 8, a small flock was seen. On September 12, a flock was seen in Illilouette Canyon, three thousand feet above the Valley floor.

On September 28, while we sat eating lunch, a strange bird flew out of the wild coffee bushes and lit in the branches of a Kellogg oak some twenty feet above our heads. We both thought it a waxwing. The actions of the bird were right, but the silhouette was a trifle off—the head did not appear to be crested. The strange bird sat quietly until a flicker flashed by, then, as though frightened, it crouched and sidled along the branch just as waxwings do when crowding together on a limb. In the course of a half hour the bird came three times to the coffee bush. The first two trips it stopped some distance away. As it pulled off berries, with its back towards us, we could plainly see two distinct white streaks, one on either side of the rump. The last time the bird came down from the oak we were able to get within six feet of it, and to identify it as a Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrula*). We were greatly surprised to see the Waxwing swallow eight large coffee berries in the few minutes that he stayed in the bush.

Many other interesting birds were seen during our stay in the Valley, some that passed through in early spring on their way to the higher country, and birds that were driven down into the Valley during storms.—CHARLES W. MICHAEL and ENID MICHAEL, Yosemite, California, March 10, 1920.

**The Harlequin Duck in the Yosemite Valley.**—On arriving in Yosemite, on June 1, I was informed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Michael that a pair of Harlequin Ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) had been seen along the Merced River, near the Sentinel Hotel, on May 11 and May 26. On June 4, Mrs. Amy M. Bryant watched a pair of Harlequins for some time as they swam about in the river, and as they preened their feathers while perched on an old log. The birds were observed by other visitors in the Valley on several different occasions.

During July the birds were apparently absent, until July 21, when a female was discovered feeding in a gravelly riffle about one-fourth mile east of the Sentinel Bridge. The water was only three to four inches deep and the current strong. The bird seemed to be industriously turning over the rocks to obtain food between and beneath them. Often she was wholly immersed for from six to ten seconds by count. At the end of about ten minutes she drifted down the river and dove several times in still water. In the afternoon about 5:45, this female Harlequin returned to the same feeding ground and was watched again. For a full half-hour it continued feeding in the same manner, continually ducking its head under the swift current and always working up-stream.

Apparently the Harlequin does not procure all of its food by diving, but at times feeds in shallow water. The occurrence of these birds during the nesting season and the disappearance of the male during the middle of the summer would indicate nesting of the species in the Valley or close at hand, but no direct evidence in this regard was secured.—HAROLD C. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California, November 10, 1920.*

**Distribution of the Townsend Fox Sparrow.**—In studying Swarth's *Revision of the Avian Genus Passerella* (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 21, 1920, pp. 75-224), the attention of the writer was drawn to some apparently erroneous conclusions of the author regarding the migration and distribution of *Passerella iliaca townsendi*, particularly as to its winter range.

On page 145 of the paper under discussion, Swarth states "The Townsend fox sparrow is a notable example of a bird with a winter habitat nearly as sharply defined as its summer home." On page 105 he states further that "*townsendi* in turn leap-frogs over *fuliginosa*", the breeding bird of the Puget Sound and Vancouver Island region, the impression being given here and by the map on the following page that the "sharply defined" winter habitat of *townsendi* lies entirely south of that of *fuliginosa*. The author further, on pages 145-146, calls the attention of the reader to the apparently discontinuous distribution of *townsendi* in the southern part of the Alexander Archipelago. The 1909 Alexander Expedition failed to find it at the localities visited in that region, but Swarth (loc. cit.) mentions the fact that it is known to be a common summer visitant to Forrester Island, near the southern extremity of the archipelago, and records summer specimens taken by other collectors at Howkan and Wrangell.

The following data from notes of the writer accumulated during six summers (1914-15-16-17-19-20), and one winter (1919-20), spent in the region under discussion, fill some of the gaps noted by Swarth and modify some of the conclusions which he reached. The greater part of the six summers were spent on Forrester Island, but occasional short visits were made at this season of the year to nearby points on Dall and Prince of Wales islands. During the winter of 1919-20 the writer resided at Craig, Prince of Wales Island, but frequent trips were made to nearby sections, to Suemez, Dall and Long islands, and to other points on Prince of Wales Island.

That the Townsend Fox Sparrow breeds more plentifully on Forrester Island than at any other point in the southern end of the Alexander Archipelago is very true. But that it fails to breed on Prince of Wales, Dall and Long islands, the writer doubts. Although the 1909 Alexander Expedition failed to find it in the region in summer, the writer has found it at that season at Craig and Waterfall, Prince of Wales Island, at several points on Dall Island, and at Howkan, Long Island, and, though no occupied nests were examined at these points, several nests entirely typical of the bird were noted in the fall.

On Forrester Island the species was always present at the time of the writer's arrival, the earliest date being April 21 (1915). In this locality probably fifty nests were examined during six summers. The majority of the eggs are laid between May 20 and June 20, extreme nesting dates being April 29 (1915), a nest with one fresh egg, and July 9 (1916), a nest with three eggs.

During the latter part of August there is apparently a movement up the sides of the mountains, and for some time after this date *townsendi* is quite rare near sea-level. This movement is shared to a considerable extent by the Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) and Oregon Junco (*Junco oreganus oreganus*), the three species being frequently found in close proximity in the woods on the mountain sides from about 1000 feet altitude to timber line. As the weather becomes cooler they work back down the mountains to the shore. At Craig, in 1919, the Townsend Sparrow became common in

woods along the beaches by October 9, and remained so throughout the following winter. In fact, in this locality it proved to be a much more common bird in winter than in summer. Numerous specimens were taken during the winter months but few toward spring, as at this latter season they become so fat as to be difficult of preparation.

The fact that this bird winters commonly at the southern end of the Alexander Archipelago must necessarily modify Swarth's definition of its winter habitat in Oregon and northern California.—GEORGE WILLETT, *Wrangell, Alaska, November 1, 1920.*

**The Nuptial Flight of the Allen Hummingbird.**—The description of the nuptial flight of the Anna Hummingbird (Hunt, CONDOR, XXII, p. 109) has prompted me to offer an account of the mating antics of the Allen Hummingbird.

On the afternoon of April 16, 1920, I was walking through the hills back of the Claremont Club golf links when I was brought to a halt by a rather prolonged buzzing sound, very penetrating and metallic in quality, somewhat similar to the sound produced by drawing a fine-grained file over the edge of a piece of sheet steel with a sudden jerk. Looking in the direction of the sound I saw poised in the air about twenty-five feet from the ground, a male Allen Hummingbird (*Selasphorus alleni*), uttering his commonly heard mouse-like squeaks. Then followed the performance of the nuptial flight, similar to that of the Anna Hummingbird, though the path described in the air was somewhat different. He "rocked" back and forth over the female, which was perched on a twig of a low poison oak (*Rhus diversiloba*), describing a semi-circle about twenty-five feet in diameter. There was a pause at each end of the arc, and before the pause he spread his tail and shook his whole body so violently that I wondered how his feathers remained fast. During this time he continued uttering the characteristic squeaks. After several of these semi-circles were described he began his climb to a height of about seventy-five feet; and then came the "high dive". He swooped down with the speed of a comet, and on passing over the female gave the low-pitched but resonant buzzing sound which had first attracted my attention; then he curved upward and came to a pause about twenty-five feet in the air, where I had first seen him. The sound emitted on passing over the female was of a second or more in duration, and differed greatly from the instantaneous, metallic *clink* of the Anna Hummingbird.

Following the accompanying diagram in which X represents the female, he started at A, describing the arc AB with the violent shaking just before arriving at B. After a short pause at B (one or two seconds) he returned to C, repeating the shaking just before arriving, and again pausing. This much of the performance he usually repeated one or more times, thus describing several semi-circles from A to B and from B to C. The last time from C, instead of pausing he continued upward with a slow, heavy flight, describing spirals or undulations until he reached the top at D, when, without pause, he made the downward swoop, sometimes bringing up at E to recommence the whole performance, and at other times darting off to perch a few yards distant for awhile and then return.

Mr. Hunt states (loc. cit.) that he does not know whether the Anna Hummingbird adheres rigidly to the evolutions described or whether it varies them. I had the good fortune on the morning of March 15, 1920, at Washington Park, Alameda, to witness the nuptial flight of this bird and it was slightly different from his description. My bird, in making the long dive from c to d (fig. 27, loc. cit.) made a sudden jump of about six feet to the left at a point about opposite a, and then continued his downward swoop to d. Otherwise this performance was identical with that described by Mr. Hunt.—FRANK N. BASSETT, *Alameda, California, September 2, 1920.*

**A Unique Visitor.**—On the tenth day of October, nineteen hundred and twenty, at one o'clock in the afternoon, after two days of intermittent showers—some heavy, some light—a beautiful young gull landed on the woodpile in back of our cottage, which is

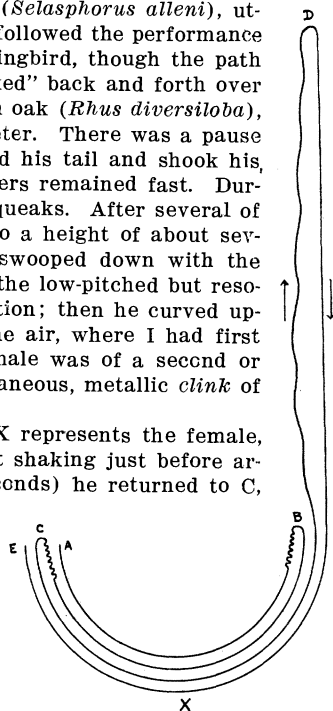


Fig. 8. DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE NUPTIAL FLIGHT OF THE MALE ALLEN HUMMINGBIRD.

situated in a lonely canyon about thirty-two miles east of the Pacific. He appeared very hungry and tired, alternately feeding and resting. He violently shook and ate the head of a rabbit discarded by our collie; he mangled a hornet attracted by the rabbit, but suddenly decided not to devour it; he snapped at passing insects; he thrust his bill with such force into a cluster of white geraniums that the petals flew in fragments to the ground; he stalked under the fig trees, with his pale lavender-gray webbed feet, and tossed the figs about, though he did not seem to relish them especially. He circled the collie, who had been nonchalantly watching him, and would have alighted on her back if she had not flicked her ear. He appeared absolutely fearless, often walking within touching distance of our hands, and occasionally resting close beside us, partially shutting his eyes, and fluffing out his breast in drowsy content.

One hour he stayed with us, and in that hour I had ample opportunity to examine him minutely and identify him as a young Sabine Gull (*Xema sabini*). This identification was later corroborated by Dr. Grinnell, who added that the bird was "evidently in full juvenal plumage—a bird hatched last June". Then he lifted his beautiful wings and flew away, flew low, over the mesas and the sage-grown hillsides, flew toward the east in a faltering manner, as though he fain would return. Did our beautiful bird, Pearlcito (for so we named him), safely voyage over the chaparral?—MELICENT HUMASON LEE, *El Cajon, California, November 29, 1920.*

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

New Year's morning, Mrs. Amelia S. Allen, Secretary of the Northern Division of the Cooper Club, gave a reception to the Club at her home on Mosswood Road, Berkeley. The occasion was a pleasant one socially, and in addition there was an ornithological feature of remarkable interest. The bird feeding table just outside the large plate window of the dining room where breakfast was served to the human guests was continually patronized by numerous avian visitors. These latter represented some ten or more species—thrashers, thrushes, wren-tits, towhees, etc.—all wild birds, behaving normally. The differential lighting on the two sides of the window, darker within than without, doubtless in part accounted for the charming obliviousness of the birds. Within, the considerable company of people was able to observe the birds closely under most comfortable conditions, even to comment upon them freely in ordinary conversational pitch of voice, without alarming or distracting the principals in the nature play being acted outside.

Mr. Aretas A. Saunders, author of *Avifauna No. 14 (Birds of Montana)*, now in press, has called our attention to an error in the postcard pre-notice of this publication sent out recently by our Business Manager. Mr. Saunders was for five years with the United States Forestry Service, and during two summers worked at the Biological Station of the University of Montana; but at no time has he been connected with the United States Biological Survey, as was stated.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Bailey are in camp for the winter in the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains, Arizona (post office, Continental, Pima County). Their camp mascot is a Roadrunner who "comes regularly for spare mice".

We learn from Dr. T. S. Palmer that the meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in Washington, D. C., November 8-11, 1920, was one of the largest in the history of the Union. One-half of the Fellows and about ten percent of the entire membership were in attendance. The business meetings were held at the Cosmos Club and the other sessions at the U. S. National Museum. The election of Fellows and Members included Mr. Robert Cushman Murphy of Brooklyn, N. Y., as Fellow; Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker and Dr. Percy Lowe of London, Honorary Fellows; and Mr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Dr. Loye Miller, Mr. Aretas A. Saunders, Prof. T. C. Stephens, and Prof. Myron H. Swenk, as Members in the restricted sense. The program of nearly 40 papers, five of which were illustrated by motion pictures, covered a wide range of subjects relating to North American birds and also included papers on the birds of Argentina, Nicaragua, Peru, Europe and Madagascar. In connection with the meeting an exhibition of drawings, paintings, and photographs of birds by American artists, supplemented by a series of prints showing the development of zoological illustration as applied to birds from the earliest times down to date, was arranged in the Division of Prints in the Library of Congress.